

BRASSWORLD JOURNAL

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Inside this issue...

2009 BRASSWORLD PREVIEW

Teams to Beat

Players to Watch

Things to Know

BRASSWORLD Honor Roll

Articles

Lucky Number Seven!

And so begins BRASSWORLD's seventh season. Inside here you will find a run down on the Opening Day status of your favorite BW club. Fancy the Burgesses, everyone's favorite legislative baseball team? Read on! Or how's about what's up on Plum Island, BW's stalwart contenders who never-seem-to-breakthrough? Or maybe you follow an NL club? What lies ahead for the MacGaffigans? Rumor as it the juggernaut has been disassembled and a rebuilding project commenced. Or maybe you were impressed with Dr. Dick's rookie managerial campaign. Do his Robber Barons have more in store for the NL in Ought Nine? Well, just scramble down the page and read it for yourself.

The importance of the number seven is strewn throughout our world. Religions incorporate into significant theological constructs. The number possesses interesting mathematical quirks and makes for a great movie title- hence *The Magnificent Seven!* Numerologists love the cantilevered number.

In baseball, the number nine is King unless we speak of The Mick. But in Strat-O-Matic, the number seven can be holy. In a game of chance, the dice coming up seven is the most common outcome. Translated to our hobby, it often means an extra base chance- or worse- it's a gba result-tucked neatly between a homer chance on a six roll and a safe, solid single if we'd rolled an eight.

Thus a seven coming up on the red dice can be the moment of exhilaration or frustration. It can turn a game, a series, a season. Who will the stars align for this year? Who's got a seven that comes up 'Champion' and who has a seven roll that merely says "thanks for playing?"

Read on to learn more...

The Cobb Crew

Silver Sluggers 2008: 105-57			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	R. Hernandez	SP	Lincecum
1B	Howard	SP	Maine
2B	Ellis	SP	W. Rodriguez
3B	Bautista/Crede	SP	Davies
SS	Cabrera	SP	P. Martinez
OF	Abreu/Werth	CL	Fuentes
OF	Beltran	SU	Madson
OF	Hamilton	SU	Okajima

Seven Things to Know

1. Silver is the defending champs.
2. Silver turned the worst-to-first trick to achieve the title.
3. Hideki Okajima finished third in Walter Johnson balloting.
4. Lenny has won titles in three BRASS leagues.
5. Silver rallied from a 3-0 deficit to defeat Northwoods.
6. Carlos Beltran had over 100 runs (105) and RBI (120).
7. Brandon Phillips hit 10 HR in 17 postseason games.

OFFENSE This is the Slugger's strength. The heart of the lineup is scary with Carlos Beltran in centerfield, Ryan Howard at 1b, Josh Hamilton in right, and a platoon of Bobby Abreu and Jayson Werth in leftfield.

Mark Ellis (2b) and Orlando Cabrera (ss) are both slightly below average hitters, but their stellar defense more than makes up for those shortcomings. Ramon Hernandez is not the defensive backstop he used to be but the position is so weak in BRASSWORLD that his 747 OPS makes him above average on offense among catchers. Joe Crede and Jose Bautista figure to time share third-base in some bastardized platoon.

On the bench, Jeff Kent can still hit lefties reasonably well and could be used as a RH platoon partner for Howard against hard lefties at 1b. Chris Burke, Shannon Stewart, Tony Pena Jr., and Ronnie Paulino will spare the regulars when needed.

PITCHING The Sluggers' starting rotation boasts one of the top pitchers in the league in Tim Lincecum. After that, it's a collection of part-time starters and average to mediocre performers.

Wandy Rodriguez and John Maine are fine, but neither threw more than 140 in MLN 2008. Kyle Davies (113 IPs) has a slightly above average ERA+ (105), but a horrible 1.45 whip. The rest of the cast is composed of part-timers Pedro Martinez, Brandon Backe, and Adam Eaton.

The Silver bullpen, however, is very strong on both sides of the mound, starting with closer Brian Fuentes. Ryan Madson, Hideki Okajima, Eddie Guardado, and Jensen Lewis round up the staff. Rookie Jeff Samadzija will help in September. Although it could use a little more depth, this is the bullpen of a contender.

PROGNOSTICATION Good team, but pending a trade or two the question marks regarding the starting rotation may prevent the Sluggers from recapturing the Cobb title let alone keeping the BRASSWORLD trophy.

Alaska Hot Stoves 2008: 80-82			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	McCann	SP	Cook
1B	Fielder	SP	Lester
2B	Derrosa	SP	Marcum
3B	Glaus	SP	C. Young
SS	Aviles/Vazquez	SP	Hendrickson
OF	McLouth	CL	Papelbon
OF	Giles	SU	Masterson
OF	Thames/Ibanez	SU	Bell

Seven Things to Know

1. Chris has a .531 winning percentage in BW.
2. The Stoves lost 15 of 18 games to the Sluggers.
3. Prince Fielder finished third in AL MVP balloting.
4. Prince led the AL in HR (56) and tied in RBI (130).
5. Chris Young yielded only 6 HR in 174 innings pitched.
6. Young was also the only Stoves starter with a winning record.
7. Starting SS Rafael Furcal signed with Annadale in FA.

OFFENSE This is a very good offense. At the heart of the lineup, the Stoves sport Prince Fielder, Troy Glaus, Brian McCann and Brian Giles, a very good mix of power and on-base abilities. The middle of the infield is equally adept with Mark Derosa and upstart Mike Aviles making waves during Spring Training. The bats should be enough to offset their middling defense. Both righty bats will have to be rested from time to time so that is where useful lefty-swinging Ramon Vazquez- signed away from Waikiki in the offseason will get his playing time.

After Giles, the other two starting outfield positions appear to belong to Nate McLouth who will probably hit lead-off - and Raul Ibanez. These two will platoon with Gabe Kapler and Marcus Thames. Greg Norton will be the primary pinch-hitter and should get a few starts in the field either at 1B or in the outfield. Left-handed outfielder Josh Anderson, right-handed Mike Cuddyer, infielders Adam Everett, Ruben Gotay, and Andy LaRoche, and catcher David Ross round out a solid bench.

PITCHING The starting rotation has two very solid starters, one from each side of the mound: Jon Lester and Adam Cook. After that, it's a bit of a patchwork, but not a bad one. Chris Young will get between 15 and 20 starts. He is solid, but struggles against left-handed batters. The very solid Shaun Marcum figures to be improved (11-13, 5.21) after a full run through the AL under his belt.

Given the need in starts, it looks like Justin Masterson, and Chan-Ho Park will be mostly used as starters. Pending a trade, average guys like Mark Hendrickson and Brian Moehler may be needed for a few starts here and there.

Moving Masterson and Park to the rotation will not affect the quality of the bullpen, which still comprises an excellent closer in Jonathan Papelbon (2.66, 26 SV), and an impressive assortment of solid relievers such as righties Jesse Crain, Heath Bell, Steven Shell, and Andrew Brown, and lefties Craig Breslow and Jerry Blevins. Middle and late innings should be safe for the Hot Stoves.

PROGNOSTICATION A definite contender for first place in the Cobb.

South Range Mariners 2008: 90-72			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	LaRue/Quintero	SP	Moyer
1B	Helton	SP	Blanton
2B	J. Lopez	SP	Balester
3B	Lowell	SP	Marshall
SS	Rollins	SP	Batista
OF	Soriano	CL	Street
OF	Ad. Jones	SU	Hanrahan
OF	Hawpe	SU	Seay

Seven Things to Know

1. The Mariners stole the most bases (130) in the AL in '08.
2. South Range was a game under .500 from July onward.
3. Jimmy Rollins' 18 triples led the AL.
4. Todd Helton leads BW all-time in two-baggers (313).
5. The M's had 4 All Stars.
6. Star Matt Holliday was traded to Aspen in the offseason.
7. Mike's family is big enough to field a Starting Nine ☺

OFFENSE The Mariners' offense will focus around long time 'Head Alfonso Soriano (290-24-94), Brad Hawpe (320-31-109), Mike Lowell (347-28-121), and Gold Glover Jimmy Rollins (25 HR, 32 SB). Todd Helton is reported aching this spring. Even a part time loss of this key Mariner vet (431 OBP) could prove debilitating to the team. Adam Jones is a potential future All-Star, but still needs some seasoning before he reaches his potential. Kevin Kouzmanouf is average, and, at close to 27 years of age, this could be as good as it gets. Catchers Jason LaRue and Humberto Quintero basically keep pitched balls from beaming the umpire.

PITCHING One problem that the team will have to address sooner than later is the lack of accomplished starters. There is no pitcher in BW more veteran than Jamie Moyer (186 career BW starts), but after him, Joe Blanton is the only other reliable (and recognizable) starter on the Mariner staff. Youth and cobbled-together rejects will be served in South Range this year barring a major trade.

Given the problems with the starting rotation, the bad news is that the Mariners' bullpen is not the most solid either. Huston Street (1.85, 30 SV) does return to anchor the pen and Joel Hanrahan has been a spark this Spring. He will have to carry it over to the real season for this pen to overachieve, however. The Mariners will enjoy the services of lefty specialists Scot Schoeneweis and Bob Seay. Last year's revelation- Troy Percival- is said to be experiencing tightness this camp. He doesn't figure to head north with the big club just yet. Pliable righties Mark Lowe and Justin Miller figure to soak up most of the middle-inning load.

Come September the Mariner staff will probably endeavor to take look-sees at young arms like Dave Robertson, Kevin Hart and Clayton Richard. If the need for starts becomes extreme, Richard may be called up even sooner.

PROGNOSTICATION All is far from being lost for South Range despite the foreseen pitching troubles. However, this is a team that may be better served by entering a rebuilding mode. Solid trade chips abound on the offense and could bring in a bundle for the mid-term future. Coupled with the arrival of promising prospects Philippe Aumont, Josh Vitters, Greg Halman, Jeremy Jeffress, Aaron Poreda, and Christian Friedrich, the Mariners should be back into shape sooner rather than later.

Mequon Keglers 2008: 59-103			
Lineup	Pitchers		
C	Doumit/Pudge	SP	Lohse
1B	C. Pena	SP	Weaver
2B	Uggla	SP	Bush
3B	Rolen	SP	Looper
SS	Betancourt	SP	Campillo
OF	Hunter	CL	Ryan
OF	Manny	SU	Chamberlain
OF	Braun	SU	Durbin

Seven Things to Know

1. Tony was an original BW member. The Keglers were in Waukesha back then.
2. A Kegler is a bowler.
3. Ryan Braun is the AL's reigning ROY.
4. The Keglers were the lowest scoring AL club in '08.
5. Joba's 7 saves in 11 games led the staff.
6. New 1b Carlos Pena won the Robinson Award as the All Star MVP last year.
7. The Keglers dominated the Rabbits (winning 12 of 18).

OFFENSE The Keglers' offense is top notch, especially at the heart of the lineup. Ryan Braun (357-34-89), Dan Uggla, Carlos Peña (48 HR in MON), and Ryan Doumit will strike fear in opposing pitchers. And third baseman Scott Rolen and centerfielder Torii Hunter are no slouches either. Manny Ramirez should be counted amongst this fearsome bunch. However, "The Manny Reputation" is still present and he hit only 11 homers last year in 503 at bats.

The Kegler bench offers nice platoon options on it roster who could/should spare Peña and Doumit versus LHP: Richie Sexon and Pudge Rodriguez. Ronnie Belliard was brought in via free agency after a solid season with SRM last year (275, 31 2B) to serve as a valuable utility player who can play all infield positions. The rest of the bench will be manned with players like outfielder Brandon Boggs, 'Mayor' Sean Casey, Wilson Betemit and Ryan Freel who all have useable skillsets. Even young left-handed hitter Daric Barton can assume that there has to be a role for him somewhere. However, veteran outfielder Geoff Jenkins is wondering where he fits after his .219 season from a year ago.

One problem may be the defense, especially in the middle. Uggla's defense has never been his calling card while scouts inform me that Yuniesky Betancourt has already lost a step at his tender age. If it's true, this may become the Keglers Achilles, which any bowler can tell you is integral to success. On the plus side, Rolen, Pena and Hunter have always been stalwarts with the leather.

PITCHING The Keglers' starting pitching figures to be very solid. Although they do not possess one clear-cut dominant ace, they have five above average starters. Rumblings suggest Johnny Cueto could become an ace for this staff by mid-season. Strong words.

The lack of an ace may hinder the Keglers come playoff time, however, the staff is perfectly suited for the 162-game marathon that is the BW season. On any given day, the Keglers will send an above average starter to the mound. Not too many BW teams can say that (editor: see South Range).

The presence of Joba Chamberlain and B.J. Ryan is enough to make Mequon's bullpen a very strong one. Both can close, and Chamberlain would probably be best served doing a Goose Gossage impersonation, i.e. pitch high-leverage and multiple innings at any point

in a close game. If Chamberlain stays in it, this is the bullpen of a championship team. If not, it is still that of a contender.

PROGNOSTICATION The Keglers are a team in the hunt for hardware.

Waikiki Rabbits 2008: 60-102			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Inge/Buck	SP	Ol. Perez
1B	Garko	SP	Meche
2B	Kinsler	SP	Danks
3B	Reynolds	SP	Bannister
SS	E. Gonzalez	SP	de la Rosa
OF	Burrell	CL	Weathers
OF	J. Guillen	SU	Lincoln
OF	De. Young	SU	Howry

Seven Things to Know

1. Matt's franchise has the lowest winning percentage (sorry, Matt).
2. The Rabbits blunted the Force last year, winning 10 of 12.
3. Waikiki hit the fewest HR (130) in the AL in '08.
4. Pat Neshek was an All Star.
5. Brad Thompson hit .275.
6. Last year's starting SS- Orlando Cabrera- joined up with the champs.
7. Ryan Garko was plunked 18 times.

OFFENSE The big question here is "Who plays centerfield?" The top three Rabbit outfielders appear to be Delmon Young, Pat Burrell and Jose Guillen, not one of whom should see centerfield on any team. There's always Corey Patterson, but unless you're truly desperate, there is no reason to start him anywhere in the field.

Other than that, Waikiki's offense is fair. Burrell can still hit (261-24-79), second baseman Ian Kinsler (819 OPS) may belong in the upper-tier of BW 2b. And projections insist Mark Reynolds can hold his own despite the 18/115 BB-K ratio during his freshman campaign.

The other contributors are slightly above or below average. Delmon Young was brought over from Silver and it is hoped he can build after he spent last season watching and learning while nabbing a ring. First baseman Ryan Garko had a middling 786 OPS last season. Edgar Gonzalez was found in the draft and may start at short for the Rabbits. And Brandon Inge (career 246 BA) has never really hit well in BW. Corey Patterson figures to be nothing more than a defensive replacement in late innings if Waikiki does not trade for a true centerfielder.

PITCHING The Rabbits have a decent twosome at the front of their rotation: reliable Gil Meche (12-11, 2.89 for MMM), and average Oliver Perez (9-9, 4.31). Things are iffier after that. John Danks may be ready to burst into the rotation this season. Brian Bannister and his 4.00 ERA will get the bulk of the remaining starts but he's not an ideal option. The number five is a two-man scrum betwixt Scott Feldman and lefty Jorge De La Rosa.

The bullpen lacks a defined closer with veteran Dave Weathers winning by default.

PROGNOSTICATION The Rabbits are focused on the future. Fourth place and avoiding 90 losses would be a solid accomplishment for this club.

Greenville Black Sox 2008: 94-68			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Zaun/Laird	SP	Byrd
1B	D. Lee	SP	Harang
2B	Pedroia	SP	Snell
3B	Dobbs/Miles	SP	Duchscherer
SS	Tejada	SP	Olsen
OF	Ichiro	CL	Qualls
OF	Milledge	SU	Hawkins
OF	Dye	SU	Corpas

Seven Things to Know

1. Ichiro led the AL with 223 hits.
2. Bob has won 7 post-season games in 4 appearances.
3. Rafael Soriano had a ridiculous 1.27 ERA in 70 IP.
4. No AL team played in more games (55) decided by one run.
5. The Sox led the AL with a 3.41 team ERA.
6. Mark Buehrle is 72-58 in his career.
7. Harang & Buehrle finished 4th and 5th in Johnson voting.

OFFENSE Through free agency and trades, Greenville has built a solid offense. The mainstays are outfielders

Jermaine Dye and franchise-face Ichiro Suzuki (314 career average, 962 career games), and Miguel Tejada at SS. Mighty Dustin Pedroia finished 4th in ROY balloting and may bust out this season for the Sox. The Gregg Zaun/Gerald Laird platoon behind the plate is a good one. Lastings Milledge may be coming into his own, but it remains to be seen what his contribution in 2009 will be after coming over from a Northwoods club that didn't need or use him much the past two seasons. Miguel Cairo and Chris Gomez can play multiple positions, although with steady Miggy at short and Pedroia the up-and-comer at second, it's hard to see what value they'll lend beyond a late inning pinch-hitting assignment.

PITCHING Greenville's pitching staff could be strong or it may flounder. Staff security-blanket Mark Buehrle left for the greener pastures of West Oakland. Aaron Harang (15-9, 3.69) returns, but one wonders if the workload may catch up with him soon. Ian Snell broke out last season (13-7, 3.56) but it's hard to project if he's angling upward or if a regression to mean may be in store for the hard-throwing right-hander. Reliable veteran Paul Byrd was signed away from South Range to augment the loss of Buehrle.

In the pen, it looks like the closer duties will be spread among a few relievers, a mix and match that will accommodate virtually every occasion: Corpas, Qualls and Hawkins all would work fine for the Sox in late-inning pressure situations. The Sox should also enjoy solid lefty specialists in the form of Trever Miller and Javier "The catcher is retired!" Lopez.

PROGNOSTICATION The offense is good, but clearly not at the same level as Mequon's or Alaska's, and the starting pitching could use some help if the team wants to contend for the Cobb Division pennant. But the above average offense and strong bullpen should put the Sox in the middle of the pack of the Cobb, and make it a contender for a playoff spot in the American League.

The Ruth Round Up

Gotham City Gargoyles 2008: 103-59			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Napoli	SP	Webb
1B	Ortiz	SP	Garza
2B	Easley	SP	Haren
3B	C. Jones	SP	Lackey
SS	Renteria	SP	Estes
OF	Cameron	CL	Rivera
OF	Day. Murphy	SU	Shouse
OF	Willingham	SU	Julio

Seven Things to Know

1. Chipper and Papi finished 1-2 in MVP balloting for GCG.
2. GCG is tied with PIG for the playoff appearance lead with 5.
3. The Gargoyles' 826 team OPS led the AL.
4. Chipper and Papi were joined by Brian Roberts to finish 1-2-3 in runs scored in the AL.
5. Brandon Webb led the NL with 229 IP.
6. Mariano Rivera is the BW career saves leader with 206.
7. Webb did, however, allow 35 steals when he pitched.

LAST YEAR Another monster regular season ended in disappointment for Gotham City in 2008, as the Gargoyles rolled up 103 wins, only to fall a bit short in the playoffs.

TRANSACTION REPORT Shackled by bank account constraints, the Gargoyles mainly filled in their roster at the edges this off-season. A trade with Montreal addressed the middle infield in one fell swoop, but neither Damion Easley nor Edgar Renteria figures to be a championship-quality player. Free-agent spending revolved around second-tier players like Craig Counsell and Emil Brown, as well as a variety of low-priced relief pitchers.

DOWN ON THE FARM As always, Gotham City has displayed a keen eye for young talent, with Lars Anderson and Pedro Alvarez poised to become cornerstone players at the corner, and Lars' illegitimate brother Brett a good bet to join one of the best starting rotations in BRASSWORLD.

PITCHING It doesn't get any better than Gotham City's top four starters, Brandon Webb (Walter Johnson Runner-up), John Lackey (19 W), Dan Haren (18 W) and Matt Garza. Shawn Estes and others will round out the rotation.

HITTING This won't be the same potent Gotham City offense we're accustomed to seeing. Reigning AL MVP Chipper Jones (382-38-110) will be joined by David Ortiz (336-40-130) and Mike Napoli (820 OPS in 202 AB) to form a studly top three, but the lineup gets thin after that, with the middle infield a big source of concern.

PROGNOSTICATION Even with a modest off-season, the Gargoyles give themselves a chance at success by trotting out a front-line rotation that's unmatched in the league. This team probably makes the playoffs even with a suspect offense. Gotham City could also go in a different direction, trading one of their veteran starters for younger talent and gearing up for a potential title run in 2010 or beyond.

Hoboken Bums 2008: 87-75			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Olivo	SP	Cain
1B	Gload	SP	Guthrie
2B	F. Sanchez	SP	Parra
3B	Gordon	SP	D. Davis
SS	Jeter	SP	G. Smith
OF	DeJesus	CL	Soria
OF	Kearns	SU	Jenks
OF	Fukudome	SU	R. Perez

Seven Things to Know

1. David DeJesus was plunked 30 times!
2. Pete is 19-17 all time against his brother in BW play.
3. The Bums' 44 SB attempts were fewest in the AL.
4. With a 4.47 team ERA, the Bums were the worst pitching entrant in the AL playoff field in '08.
5. Despite the lack of team steals, the Bums' 44 triples tied for the AL lead.
6. Segio Mitre's 16-5 season was easily the most unexpected in BW.
7. Dmitri Young is trying to eat his way out of BW (over 300 lbs).

LAST YEAR A good Hoboken squad rolled up an 87-win season, only to fall short in the playoffs in a what was a tough AL postseason.

TRANSACTION REPORT The Bums rolled into rebuilding mode, trading away slugger Adam Dunn (1.076 OPS) and third baseman Scott Rolen for maritally-challenged prospect Jose Tabata and a bunch of filler. Hoboken also steered clear of free agency, other than a few low-priced placeholders.

DOWN ON THE FARM The Bums do have a few intriguing prospects, including Wilin Rosario and Jordan Walden. Still, Hoboken lacks top 20-caliber prospects, which could make the rebuilding process take longer than hoped.

PITCHING It's a decent top three with staff ace Matt Cain (14-11, 4.82) flanked by Jeremy Guthrie (15-7, 3.78) and precocious Manny Parra. A stellar bullpen is headed by Joakim Soria (2.05, 26 SV). Bobby Jenks (1.51, 60 IP) and Rafael Perez (4.34, 56 IP) have the potential to be the most dominant setup tandem in BW. There's just enough pitching talent here to make things interesting...

HITTING ...that's certainly not the case with the offense, though. The loss of big-bopper Dunn hurts. Derek Jeter (767 OPS) has the rep but the not the bat to impact While third-sacker Alex Gordon is improving (231-8-48), but not quite ready for prime time. David DeJesus (692 OPS) has to improve mightily to help the club in '09.

PROGNOSTICATION This looks like a 75-win team, with some decent starting pitching and a killer closer, but a weak offense. The Bums might look to trade some of their remaining vets for prospects, though ditching the monster contracts of Jeter and Kearns would be a challenge.

Dublin GaelForce 2008: 84-78			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	B. Molina	SP	R. Johnson
1B	Berkman	SP	Arroyo
2B	Polanco	SP	Volquez
3B	Encarnacion	SP	Carmona
SS	J. Wilson	SP	Eveland
OF	Pence	CL	Valverde
OF	C. Ross	SU	Downs
OF	Choo	SU	Yates

Seven Things to Know

1. Dublin led the AL with a team BA of 286.
2. The GaelForce smacked 374 doubles to lead the AL.
3. Dublin was one of two AL clubs to win a season series with SIL.
4. James Loney hit 11 triples (in only 275 AB).
5. Placido Polanco did not make an error in 155 games.
6. Jim Thome's 42 dingers will be missed.
7. Cody Ross registered a 1.206 OPS as a platoon outfielder.

LAST YEAR One of three 80-something-win teams in a deep Ruth Division, Dublin picked the wrong season to trot out a good, but not great roster, getting outgunned within the conference by the likes of Silver, Gotham City and others. The GaelForce did fight bravely, pushing Gotham to seven games before succumbing.

TRANSACTION REPORT The GaelForce added a solid starting catcher to a deep lineup by acquiring Bengie Molina (279-25-76 for ANN) in trade. Dublin needed to upgrade its starting rotation, but a lack of cash (a common theme in this division) prevented any major moves on the free-agent market.

DOWN ON THE FARM Few teams trot out a better quartet of MINs than Dublin, with shortstop Elvis Andrus, starting pitcher Trevor Cahill, outfielder Jason Heyward and catcher Carlos Santana. The GaelForce are in dire need of long-term help at short, catcher and in the starting rotation as well, making their stable of prospects a great future fit.

PITCHING The staff is praying that ancient Randy Johnson can pitch more than his 59 inning cameo of a year ago. Edison Volquez (6.75, 29 IP) was a disaster September but has been all the talk of spring camp. Reliable Bronson Arroyo (13-10, 4.79) is still here to lead the staff if Johnson proves unfit once again. Jose Valverde simply isn't a pitcher that you would associate with his terrible 7.13 performance in '08.

HITTING It's a strong lineup, headed by one of the most reliable producers in BW, Lance Berkman (289-30-100). But the GaelForce roster is also screaming for trades, with Casey Blake blocked at third base, Howie Kendrick at second, and a cast of thousands at first base, including Kendry Morales, James Loney and Jim Thome.

PROGNOSTICATION How Dublin fares will depend in large part on the skill of its general manager. A couple of clever trades centering around players like Thome, Loney and Kendrick could bolster the pitching staff and yield a true contender. Stand pat, and the GaelForce could experience a frustrating wasted season.

Plum Island Greenheads 2008: 82-80			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Bard/Bako	SP	Zambrano
1B	LaRoche	SP	Wakefield
2B	L. Castillo	SP	Suppan
3B	Cantu	SP	K. Kendrick
SS	Tulowitzki	SP	Glavine
OF	Guerrero	CL	Lyon
OF	Church	SU	Wright
OF	S. Hairston	SU	Mota

Seven Things to Know

1. No BW franchise has won more games than Plum Island.
2. Henry has managed the AL All Star team twice, losing both games.
3. 'Big Z' has won the Mathewson Award three times.
4. Runners stole 66 bases when Michael Barrett caught.
5. Woody Williams' 33 HRA topped the AL.
6. Vlad Guerrero has 188 career HR.
7. Brandon Lyon has 4 career saves.

LAST YEAR Plum Island kept its string of winning seasons alive. Once a World Series contender with some of the best home cooking in BW, Plum Island settled for a mediocre 2008 season.

TRANSACTION REPORT The Greenheads made three off-season trades, dealing Carlos Guillen (283-14-42) in a salary dump, dealing Alfonso Soriano (290-24-94) and top reliever Matt Thornton for a first-round pick and young pitching, then pulling that rarest of BW deals--a brother for brother move that shipped out Jerry Hairston and brought in his brother Scott. Plum Island pulled off one of the better free-agent spending jobs, acquiring under-30 corner infielders Jorge Cantu and Adam LaRoche for just over \$4 million a year combined.

DOWN ON THE FARM It's a bonanza of pitching, with Tommy Hanson, Carlos Carrasco and Wade Davis poised to rebuild the Greenheads staff...

PITCHING ...which is good news, because Carlos Zambrano (16-9, 2.92) is the only above-average starter on this team. Lots of innings eaters, but no pennant-contending talent. The bullpen is equally suspect.

HITTING LaRoche and Vlad (279-19-95), and pray not to be too bad? Tulowitzki (287-22-82) may drop in performance simply due to mathematical theory and the vagaries of happenstance. Light-hitting Luis Castillo (731 OPS, 19 SB) has long been predicted for a failure. It all adds up to the fact that the Greenheads are left at least a couple of impact bats short of contention.

PROGNOSTICATION Look for Plum Island to end its streak of above-.500 seasons, as the team regroups. Three years from now, a rotation headed by Hanson, Carraso and Davis could be one of the best in BRASSWORLD.

Williamsburg Burgesses 2008: 78-84			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Y. Molina	SP	Silva
1B	Delgado	SP	Braden
2B	Utley	SP	Contreras
3B	Zimmerman	SP	An. Reyes
SS	Eckstein	SP	A. Miller
OF	Ankiel	CL	Nelson
OF	Hermida	SU	Romero
OF	Griffey	SU	Rauch

Seven Things to Know

1. WIL tied for the most wins (32) against LH starters.
2. WIL played a 23 inning game vs WAI in April.
3. Chase Utley led the AL with 60 doubles.
4. Ryan Zimmerman's 29 GIDP also led the AL.
5. Jose Contreras tied for the most losses in the AL (17).
6. WIL stole the fewest bases in the AL (32).
7. Carlos Silva has a 5.03 career ERA.

LAST YEAR It was a transition year for 78-win Williamsburg, which looks poised to make a run in the near future given its stash of cash and prospects.

TRANSACTION REPORT The Burgesses passed on the trade market, but plunged into the free-agent market. Williamsburg's best move may have been acquiring two excellent relievers in Joe Nelson and J.C. Romero (1.65, 33 IP for MEQ) for about \$2 million combined per year. There's good trade deadline potential for this team, if Williamsburg decides to load up even further for next season.

DOWN ON THE FARM Colby Rasmus and Aaron Hicks form a great future duo in the outfield, while Brian Matusz should bolster the rotation in a couple years.

PITCHING Carlos Silva (8-14, 5.15) is thrust into the role of ace and mentor after the departure of Johan Santana (13-11, 3.12). Anthony Reyes, Andrew Miller and Dallas Braden are more likely to form the #3 to #5 portion of the rotation down the road, so look for Williamsburg to make a big splash on the pitching market, possibly as soon as next off-season. The bullpen is reliable and should be able to stamp out fires and allow a solid offense to pull out some unexpected W's over the course of the season. Why?

HITTING Because the Burgesses are a pretty good offensive outfit, constructed perfectly for lefty-favored Bruton Parish Commons with five capable lefty bats in Hermida, Griffey, Ankiel, Delgado (284-26-78) and Utley (960 OPS), the MVP-caliber second baseman. Zimmerman and Molina offer solid building blocks too.

PROGNOSTICATION If Williamsburg dips into its bank account next off-season, the Burgesses could compete for a division title by 2010. Not this year, though.

New York Metz 2008: 50-112			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Iannetta	SP	Nolasco
1B	Morneau	SP	Maholm
2B	Iwamura/Weeks	SP	Wolf
3B	Longoria	SP	Perkins
SS	Aybar	SP	Blackburn
OF	Nady	CL	B. Wilson
OF	Ellsbury	SU	Gaudin
OF	B. Francisco	SU	Rupe

Seven Things to Know

1. The Metz hated southpaws as they won 9 times in 41 starts.
2. The pitching staff yielded the most runs in the AL (952).
3. Chris issued the most free passes in the AL (33).
4. Dontrelle Willis' 375 BA was easily the best in the AL among pitchers.
5. First time All Star Justin Morneau homered in his only AB.
6. The Metz were 1-11 against Silver.
7. Metz fielders rang up a .657 X-percentage- lowest in the AL.

LAST YEAR New York took a beating last year, winning just 50 games and finishing 28 games behind the next-worst team in the division.

TRANSACTION REPORT The Metz mostly eschewed the trade route, then made two moderate free agent pickups in Chad Gaudin and Melky Cabrera. It's been a perplexing off-season for New York, given how strong its core of players is and how much money the team has at its disposal. The Metz might be looking ahead one more season before making its run.

DOWN ON THE FARM Mike Stanton hit 39 home runs as an 18-year-old, leading the minors. Stephen Strasburg is arguably the best pitching prospect in a generation. Even if no one else pans out, the Metz are sitting pretty with that power couple.

PITCHING Lots of good, young pitching here. Ricky Nolasco (6-10, 3.88) is back after missing all of last season. Paul Maholm (8-12, 7.74) figures to be better for the 'learning lumps' he received in 2008. Count on Randy Wolf performing better as well (3-8, 6.00). A collection of youngsters will mix and match to fill out the remainder of the rotation. Edwin Jackson (5-14, 4.50) is no slouch and may fetch something on the trade market if the youngsters prove more than reliable for the Metz.

HITTING Justin Morneau (287-31-110) anchors a lineup that has the potential to be stellar. Last season's 'one-to-watch,' Evan Longoria, figures to graduate to BW in 2009. Chris Iannetta put in his time last year and has been tabbed to start at catcher. Import Aki Iwamura (799 OPS) may be a bit of a forgotten man but he did garner some ROY support for the national press in postseason balloting.

PROGNOSTICATION Be afraid, be very afraid. New York tunneled out from one of the worst situations imaginable for a Strat team, ditching the preposterous contracts of Derrek Lee and Chris Carpenter and building an army of under-30 studs in the process. Add Strasburg to the mix, and let's just say Ruth division rivals will want to make a run at the crown now, while they still can.

The Aaron Assemblage

Annadale Anteaters 2008: 39-123			
Lineup	Pitchers		
C	Pierzynski	SP	Santana
1B	Overbay	SP	Myers
2B	Loretta/Kennedy	SP	Garland
3B	Feliz	SP	Floyd
SS	Furcal	SP	Owings
OF	Lind	CL	Heilman
OF	Rowand	SU	Grabow
OF	Span/Spilborghs	SU	Burnett

Seven Things to Know

1. The Anteater season was the worst on BW record.
2. Annadale won only 7 games vs LHP- the lowest total in BW.
3. ANN lost 17 of 18 to TAG.
4. Lyle Overbay hit .200- 67 points off his career average.
5. New starting pitchers Santana & Garland had 24 wins last season.
6. Jorge de la Rosa led the NL in appearances with 81.
7. Robert is 13-12 in two postseason appearances.

LAST YEAR Annadale had a very challenging 2008, finishing with a league-worst 39-123 record. Last year was the end of the rebuilding period in Annadale, but the fans may still need some convincing.

It was a tough year across the board, as the offense posted a league-low .655 OPS, scored only 537 runs, and the pitching staff had a league-worst 5.50 ERA. The lone bright spots were Bengie Molina outperforming expectations with a 25-HR year (and who has since signed on with DUB), and a strong year from Brett Myers (3.19, 68 IP) out of the bullpen

TRANSACTION REPORT Owner Robert Smith took steps to address his team's weaknesses in the off-season, making some big free agent signings, including a \$55M commitment (5 years, \$11M/year) to Johan Santana (74-55 in BW career), \$15.5M to Jon Garland, and \$35M to Rafael Furcal, AJ Pierzynski, and Aaron Rowand (308-29-116 for PHS). The team cut ties with Nate Robertson, and aged vets Darin Erstad and Shawn Green. Joining the club from the minors is next year's phenom (and this year's bullpen help) David Price.

DOWN ON THE FARM 2008's tough finish enabled the selection of Madison Bumgarner to bolster the farm club, which graduated Price and the disappointing (so far) Ian Kennedy. Gerardo Parra and Gorkys Hernandez are a pair of excellent up-and-coming outfielders. Neil Walker needs to show some improvement after high expectations from previous years.

PITCHING This is where the Anteaters will see improvement in their W column generated. Johan is a true-blue ace while Gavin Floyd has been pegged by many to bust out from simply being a yearly guesstimation. Jon Garland, signed away from GBS, will eat innings while Brett Myers returns from a year spent in the Anteater pen.

PROGNOSTICATION Annadale's free agent signings will improve the club. Johan Santana by himself is probably a 10-win improvement, but Annadale still lacks impact offense, and will struggle to top 70 wins.

Georgia Satellites 2008: 105-57			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Montero/Baker	SP	Burnett
1B	Pujols	SP	Baker
2B	J. Castillo	SP	Jimenez
3B	Hall	SP	Billingsley
SS	Crosby	SP	Duke
OF	Scott	CL	Hoffman
OF	Ludwick	SU	Casilla
OF	Rios	SU	Parrish

Seven Things to Know

1. AJ Burnett tossed two one-hitters for the Sats in '08.
2. 2008 ended a streak of 4 straight MVP seasons for Albert Pujols.
3. Four fifths of the projected Sats rotation is home grown.
4. Georgia committed the most errors in the NL (112).
5. Georgia starters completed the most starts in BW (30).
6. No BW team won more games within their division than the Sats (69).
7. AJ Burnett had the only 15 whiff game in BW in 2008.

LAST YEAR Georgia's 105-57 mark was good for second-best in the NL last year. They had their playoff's cut short, however, by Northwoods' surprising run to the World Series, losing in seven games to the Moose.

Georgia was strong in all parts of the game in 2008, posting top-10 numbers in both ERA and OPS. The offensive attack was balanced, with only Chone Figgins' 51 stolen bases showing up on the league's leaderboard, though Albert Pujols had a typically-strong year (ed: for a guy who didn't win his fourth straight MVP). Pitching was more top-heavy, with John Smoltz and Kelvim Escobar posting nearly identical ERA's (Escobar 2.96, Smoltz 2.99) in the top ten. Those two, along with AJ Burnett, accounted for 47 wins.

TRANSACTION REPORT Georgia's financial situation kept them from making any meaningful moves in the offseason. They ran afoul of the commissioner's office for some "irregularities" and were forced to pay steep fines. Spring injuries have also derailed their top two pitchers from last year, as neither Smoltz nor Escobar will be available to help in 2009.

DOWN ON THE FARM Georgia is excited about the long-term potential of slugging phenom Angel Villalona, and Yankee outfielder Austin Jackson. Apart from those two, the farm system could use an upgrade during this season and next off-season.

HITTING Albert will count on offensive assistance from a talented and dynamic Satellite outfield. Alex Rios is a do-everything-talent (851 OPS, 11 SB) while Luke Scott is a dangerous platoon option. If Ryan Ludwick performs as he did in '08 (963 OPS, 319 AB) over a full season, Pujols will enjoy solid lineup protection. Carlos Gomez will be called upon to annoy various pitchers around the league as he dances off of first base.

PROGNOSTICATION The lineup is still solid, but the turnover at the top of the rotation will cost Georgia dearly. It's time to Eat A Peach and watch a 73-89 season from the Satellites.

Taggart Titans 2008: 74-88			
Lineup	Pitchers		
C	Navarro	SP	Sabathia
1B	Huff	SP	Greinke
2B	Roberts	SP	Zito
3B	Atkins	SP	Galarraga
SS	Hardy	SP	McClung/Smith
OF	Cust	CL	Torres
OF	Young	SU	Kuo
OF	Gerut/Crisp	SU	Francisco

Seven Things to Know

1. The team's name comes from a prominent family in the novel *Atlas Shrugged*.
2. Jack Cust produced only 69 RBI on 35 home runs.
3. Taggart played a 16 inning game vs VIR- longest in the NL.
4. James Shields yielded 38 HR to pace the NL.
5. A 16-11 September was the only moth TAG was over .500.
6. Corey Hart stole 36 bases in 37 attempts.
7. TAG saw the fewest LHP (30).

LAST YEAR The Titans finished with a 74-88 mark in 2008, which is probably better than expected, given that they finished in the bottom-third of the league in OPS and ERA.

Coach Lentz knows how to get the most out of his guys though, as Jack Cust (ROY winner in the NL) blew past anybody's expectations to knock 35 HRs and JJ Hardy (263-24-82) played solidly all year. Heck the coach even got three wins out of Mike Maroth, and that deserves some sort of award.

TRANSACTION REPORT Mark must have lost faith in Maroth (no longer on the roster), because he dropped a PILE of cash (\$10M/year for five years) on CC Sabathia (17-12, 2.89 for VIR), and spent 4 years/\$4M on Zach Greinke to lead the pitching staff. These two represent huge upgrades, but at a hefty price.

On the offense, Taggart traded for Aubrey Huff to give them some much-needed left handed power, and also picked up Brian Roberts (44 2B, 24 SB) to nail down the keystone sack.

DOWN ON THE FARM Yonder Alonso is a few years away, but is a highly regarded young slugger. Cole Gillespie fits the same bill, but with a little lower ceiling (and maybe an earlier arrival date). Brett Wallace should also help in a few years, with a high-average stroke. On the mound, Jordan Zimmerman could see BW action next year, and is an extremely promising young right-hander.

PITCHING Zach Greinke (8-6, 3.69) got his career back on track in a swingman role for the Titans last season. It came at the right time as Titan management rewarded the ace-in-waiting with a long term deal. Third overall draft pick Armando Galarraga will be expected to perform from Day One for the Titans- a lot of pressure for a kid not in the Show last year. Barry Zio owns a career winning percentage of .614 in his BRASSWORLD starts.

PROGNOSTICATION Both as a by-product of a weaker division, and from the signing of some very, very good new talent, I think Taggart can jump up around the 91 win mark and make some playoff noise.

Virginia Patriots 2008: 87-75			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Soto	SP	Lee
1B	Konerko	SP	Lowe
2B	Durham	SP	Saunders
3B	Youkilis	SP	Dempster
SS	Theriot/Vizquel	SP	S. Hill
OF	Bradley	CL	Nathan
OF	Victorino	SU	Wagner
OF	Markakis	SU	Dotel

Seven Things to Know

1. Virginia led the NL with a 3.61 team ERA.
2. Mike possesses a lifetime winning percentage of .541 in BW.
3. Virginia scored the fewest runs of any NL playoff team in '08.
4. The Pats led the NL in SB.
5. Mike attempted the hit and run 128 times in '08- more than double the next BW club.
6. **CC** Sabathia 69 career W's. Derek Lowe? 73.
7. Shane Victorino batted .458 in PH opportunities.

LAST YEAR Virginia closed out the year with an 87-75 mark. Good enough for a first round playoff series against Northwoods, which they lost in a heartbreaker, 4-3.

The Patriots did it with pitching, and with CC Sabathia (now with TAG) leading the way. The lack of offense is telling, as CC's 2.89 ERA was only good enough for a 17-12 mark. Coach Mike Bardos also got a strong curtain-call season from Roger Clemens, who posted an 11-2 record in a partial-season's work. Shane Victorino's 49 stolen bases provided some offensive spark.

TRANSACTION REPORT CC Sabathia's contract expiration required his departure, but there is cautious hope that Cliff Lee can step to the front of the Virginia rotation following a trade with Bloomington. Fellow trade acquisition Ryan Dempster (2.55 in 60 relief IP for ASP) will form the second part of a completely rebuilt rotation. Coach Bardos also hopes that newcomer Milton Bradley (912 OPS in 200 AB for Maryland) can help push some runs across in support of the starters.

DOWN ON THE FARM Even Virginia isn't all that thrilled about Virginia's youngsters, with Chris Valaika, an interesting shortstop prospect that may be the best of the bunch.

PITCHING While much can be made of a strong Patriot rotation might be the pen that makes the club a serious contender for hardware. Joe Nathan (2.91, 15 SV, 74 IP) is the closer while fellow vet Billy Wagner (3.20, 70 IP) will be available for when the big right hander is tired or the matchup more favorable to the lefty. Another option will be Octavio Dotel who saved 11 games last season for TAG in only 25 innings pitched. Lastly, security blanket Russ Springer (2.17, 62 IP) was just brought back in a trade with MON.

PROGNOSTICATION The rotation didn't get worse, even with Sabathia's departure, the bullpen looks strong, and a full season from early ROY favorite Geovany Soto will help add to the offense. This looks like another high-80s win total in Virginia.

Lafontaine Park Diamonds 2008: 52-110			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Snyder	SP	Mussina
1B	Giambi	SP	F. Hernandez
2B	Johnson	SP	Matsuzaka
3B	Ar. Ramirez	SP	Shields
SS	Young	SP	Maddux
OF	Ethier	CL	Wood
OF	Damon	SU	Devine
OF	Quentin	SU	Affeldt

Seven Things to Know

1. Daniel issued 46 IBB- most in the NL.
2. Hernandez (16) and Dice-K (18) topped the NL in pitching losses.
3. No manager has seen more postseason games than Daniel (63).
4. Led by Billy Butler (0), no BW team attempted fewer steals (40).
5. Diamond OFs threw out the most runners (61) in BW.
6. Greg Maddux benefited from the most run support in BW in '08.
7. Jason Giambi is 8th on the BW walks career leaderboard (525).

LAST YEAR Coach Daniel Valois was disappointed with last year's 52-110 mark, especially since it represented a 46-win drop from a strong 2007 squad.

Injuries hurt the club, taking Felix Hernandez out of the rotation, and pulling up some under-talented replacements, like Tony Armas Jr. The lineup had a major power shortage, with only Andruw Jones (and his .192 batting average) hitting over 20 homers. The pitching staff lacked any leadership, and gave up the third-most runs in the league.

TRANSACTION REPORT It was a busy off-season for Coach Valois, who picked up Aramis Ramirez (and his large contract) for Ian Stewart, and also added James Shields and Michael Young in trades. Greg Maddux (86-26 in 202 career BW games) will also make his BW swan song with LPD, as he was signed to a one-year deal and has announced his retirement will come at season's end.. Daniel also added some key bullpen depth through smaller free-agent signings.

DOWN ON THE FARM The Diamonds have some very exciting young talent in the minors. Justin Smoak and Tim Beckham, and Jesus Montero will all be strong lineup additions in the next couple of years. Aaron Crow and Michael Main have a good chance to be strong members of the pitching staff.

HITTING The Diamonds should feature the best lineup in the Aaron, night-in-night-out. Jason Giambi's prowess with the stick is notable and Aramis Ramirez is coming off of a 60 XBH season with ANN. Michael Young (316-13-102) will give LPD some of the best SS production in BW. If Carlos Quentin carries forward with his spring breakout- watch out.

PROGNOSTICATION Add one top-tier pitcher (Shields- 13-9, 3.29 with TAG), get one back from injury (Hernandez), let one get used to US hitting (Matsuzaka). Add a strong middle-of-the-order hitter, and get a breakout year from Carlos Quentin...Hmmm...I think the yo-yo records will bounce back up and give LPD a playoff season in 2009.

Palm Harbor Sandcranes 2008: 95-67			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Treanor/Coste	SP	Halladay
1B	J. Rivera	SP	Vazquez
2B	Grudzielanek	SP	Lilly
3B	Beltre	SP	D. Cabrera
SS	Guzman	SP	Wang
OF	Ordonez	CL	F. Cordero
OF	Crawford	SU	Capps
OF	Wells	SU	Broxton

Seven Things to Know

1. Magglio Ordonez is the reigning NL batting champion.
2. Juan Pierre had the only 5 SB game in BW in 2008.
3. Juan Pierre has the most steals in BW history (470).
4. 2008 yielded Fred's first appearance in the BW postseason.
5. The Cranes' 3.72 ERA was good for 2nd in the NL.
6. Carl Crawford is a career .291 hitter.
7. Career combined at bats for Treanor and Coste? 752.

LAST YEAR Firstly, last year they resided in Port Richey, but they got run out of town after a measly 95-win season. It's hard to please some fans... Maybe it was the first-round playoff exit to Palo Alto that got them all riled up.

The strong year was lead by Roy Halladay and Javier Vazquez, who both posted 17-win marks. Their hitters tend toward the high-average, low-slugging side of the ledger, though Magglio Ordonez did post a 1.000+ OPS, he was the only Sandcrane above .900.

TRANSACTION REPORT Palm Harbor didn't need to make a lot of changes, and they didn't. They did pick up Ted Lilly (17-8, 3.75 with SIL) in the free agent market, to add to an already-strong staff. Ty Wigginton (235-16-53) was acquired to fill some lineup holes

DOWN ON THE FARM Youth isn't a strong part of the SandCranes' development. They have some young corner infielders with Kevin Ahrens and Michael Almanzar that could help the club, and a high-risk, medium-reward pitcher in Henry Sosa.

HITTING Who's on first? That's the big question in Palm Harbor at the start of the 2009 season. Kevin Millar (290-14-57) would have been a wise resign for the 'Cranes but the congenial first-sacker signed with MON instead. Right now, Brian Buscher and Juan Rivera figure to platoon at the position but it is hard to see that lasting well into the season given the outfield depth on the 'Cranes. Carl Crawford's 43 swipes led a club that finished second in the NL with 152 stolen bags.

PROGNOSTICATION With the staff improving, and the lineup likely to only slide a bit, the SandCranes should sit right around the 92-win mark this year.

The Mays Milieu

Aspen Rainmakers 2008: 64-98			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Shoppach	SP	Kazmir
1B	C. Jackson	SP	Wainwright
2B	Hudson	SP	Harden
3B	Figgins	SP	Kuroda
SS	Peralta	SP	Slowey
OF	Holliday	CL	Wheeler
OF	Winn	SU	Balfour
OF	Dunn	SU	Carlson

Seven Things to Know

1. Rene attempted 20 squeeze plays- enough to lead the NL.
2. He also bunted 118 times- 23 more than next-most in the NL.
3. Rene's onl playoff appearance coincided with his Mays crown.
4. Kuroda was brought over from Japan after extensive scouting by Rene personally.
5. Adam Dunn finished 5th in AL MVP balloting.
6. Dunn ranks 5th all time in BW free passes (563).
7. Chone Figgins has 221 SB- good for 8th all time in BW.

LAST YEAR Aspen finished the 2008 season 19th in the league in hitting at .254 and 18th in pitching with a 4.93 ERA. After a last place finish in the division, Rene knew he had some work to do if he wanted this team to compete in the division. Aspen was aware that going into the Free Agency that they were in desperate need of a couple of power hitters and a whole new bullpen.

TRANSACTION REPORT In the off season the Rainmakers made some very nice improvements to their team.

Aspen dealt away starting pitcher Ryan Dempster for Kelly Shoppach, Chris Carter and Virginia's 2010 1st round draft choice. Next they picked up Alfonso Soriano. Aspen sent Kevin Frandsen, Kyle Kendrick, Aspen's 2009 1st round draft choice and \$1,500,000 to get him and lefty relief specialist Matt Thornton. To help the bullpen they dealt for Dan Wheeler. Free agency came around the Rainmakers opened their wallet and spent some money to get Orlando Hudson and Chone Figgins. Aspen also signed 3 significant relievers Grant Balfour, Darrin Oliver, and Mike Adams. The Rainmakers also landed Hiroki Kuroda for a reasonable 19 million spread out over four years. The latest trade was to turn around and deal Soriano, Blanton, Kouzmanoff and a pick for Matt Holliday and Buddy Carlyle.

PITCHING Aspen's pitching for 2009 is greatly improved. Five solid starters in Kazmir, Wainwright, Harden, Kuroda and Slowey will make for a very consistent season. The bullpen has also gotten a lot better. The bullpen will feature 'shutdown' types, a winning characteristic obviously garnered from observing the MacGaffigan machine the last few seasons..

HITTING The Rainmakers have a swift top of the order in Figgins and Winn. Those two will set the table for Holliday and Dunn. They have some power behind them in Shoppach and Peralta. Lineup depth should allow the Rainmakers to stretch 300-type hitters in the 7 and 8 holes.

PROGNOSTICATION Aspen receives an A+ for their work done in the off season to improve this team and help them contend in the division. This was a team that made a complete make over during the winter. Most of the pieces are in place for them to improve and make a run at a playoff spot. Word from the Rainmakers management is that they “will go deep in the playoffs and maybe all the way to the top”.

Bloomington Geeks			
2008: 75-87			
	Lineup	Pitchers	
C	Martinez	SP	Beckett
1B	Votto	SP	Liriano
2B	Cano	SP	Sonnanstine
3B	Lamb/Aurilia	SP	Padilla
SS	Greene	SP	Redding
OF	Schumaker	CL	Lidge
OF	Bruce	SU	Ziegler
OF	Kemp	SU	Corcoran

Seven Things to Know

1. Victor Martinez grounded into the most DPs- 35.
2. Khalil Greene's 50 doubles tied for the NL lead.
3. Bill was the only NL manager to play Jonah even in '08 (9-9).
4. The Pats, however, proved much tougher (1-11).
5. Maryland had a better team ERA than the NL champ Moose.
6. Josh Beckett is 60-50 with a 4.20 ERA in his BW career.
7. Takashi Saito blew only 2 saves in 28 opportunities.

LAST YEAR A year ago this team was the Maryland Mounders and Bill was probably angling out to be a pest, at least, to Jonah and Corey. With the unfortunate passing of Bill Galanis, Vaughn Nuestr took over the team and re-named them the Bloomington Geeks. The team looks this year to improve on a 75 win season. Maryland came in around the league average for hitting and pitching. Losing 11 out 12 games to Virginia during the season prevented them from finishing at .500. BTW, this is an actual picture of Vaughn as freshman in high school☺



TRANSACTION REPORT Bloomington made several transactions this off season to improve the squad. They added some nice bargains in free agency in Rich Aurilia, Clint Barmes, Ray Durham, Joe Beimel, Fernando Tatis and Jim Edmonds to help out this year. The Geeks were also busy on the trade front during the winter months. Vaughn brought in Joey Votto, Robinson Cano, Brandon Wood, Andy Sonannstine and Skip Schumaker. In the draft, Bloomington selected Brad Ziegler and Roy Corcoran for bullpen depth and added Brett Gardner for the outfield.

DOWN ON THE FARM Waiting in the wings for the Geeks are Cameron Maybin, Nick Adenhardt, Steve Pearce, J.R. Towles, Daniel Bard and Ben Revere. These players should start to compliment the players already on hand very soon.

PITCHING Bloomington has a very solid 1-2-3 rotation in Josh Beckett, Francisco Liriano and Andy Sonanstine. While these three should be in the fold for years to come,

the Greeks do need to make sure Liriano is healthy before relying on him. The young Dominican flamethrower missed all of last season to Tommy John surgery. The bullpen is anchored by Brad Lidge who was perfect in save opportunities for the Phillies last year. It will be interesting if Lidge exits the season on the Greek roster given Vaughn's already stated goal of getting younger talent on board. Set up guys, Takashi Saito and Manny Delcarmen should bridge many games to Lidge.

HITTING This is a solid lineup but may be lacking a bit in the power department this year. The defense is only average with 3's at SS, 2nd, 1st, and Bruce's E17 in the outfield but those numbers should improve over the years. The offense will hold its own but will need the pitching to carry them at times.

PROGNOSTICATION Bloomington is a team on the move upward. They will improve on last year's record and could have a chance to be a playoff team if they could find a power hitting 3rd baseman to go with the rest of the lineup. The team is solid this year with a chance to be better every year from here on.

Montreal McGaffigans 2008:113-49			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Posada	SP	Gonzalez/Fogg
1B	Millar	SP	Bedard/Olson
2B	Harris	SP	Dickey/Ponson
3B	Wright	SP	Bonderman
SS	Escobar	SP	Burres/Dumatrait
OF	Duncan	CL	Springer
OF	Granderson	SU	Cormier
OF	Joyce	SU	Villone

Seven Things to Know

1. Jonah is the only manager with two BW titles.
2. Twice the Macs went 23-4 in a month of play in 2008.
3. The Macs defeated Aspen 22-0 in a game last September.
4. The feasting was year long on Aspen as they won 16 of 18.
5. At 56-25 the Macs were the best road show in BW.
6. Jorge Posada has 133 career home runs.
7. Montreal was the only BW team to plate 1000 runs (1081).

LAST YEAR In 2008 Montreal led the league in wins with 113 and smashed 256 homers. They finished 16 games ahead of the next best team. The McGaffigan's were a model of consistency winning 57 games at home and 56 games on the road. The two time league champion was well on its way to a 3rd title in a row when they got upset by the Northwoods Moose in the NLCS.

TRANSACTION REPORT After several tremendous winning seasons, Montreal is now in a rebuilding mode. Most of their blue chip players were dealt in the off season. Some of the big names gone are Carlos Pena, Joey Votto, Grady Sizemore, A.J. Pierzynski, J.J. Putz and Edgar Renteria. Coming in were several draft picks, prospects to build with in the future and replacement-type players to tide the fans over till the next juggernaut commences.

DOWN ON THE FARM The players that were added during the winter all have a chance to be great BRASSWORLD'ers. Help is on the way with Rick Porcello, Jarrod Parker, Derek Holland and Ethan Martin on the pitching side. Offensive players include Matt Weiters, Matt LaPorta, Eric Hosmer and Gordon Beckham. This could be one heck of a team if these players all pan out in BW.

PITCHING This is a team that we are not accustomed to seeing. In 2009 Jonah will have to mix and match with several pieces in the starting rotation and in the bullpen. The McGaffigan's will have to employ 8 or 9 pitchers to fill the rotation this year.

HITTING A young core already exists here with Curtis Granderson (337-22-98), David Wright (329-32-121) and Yunel Escobar (350-4-41, for MMM). While this trio is solid, it is not enough to carry this team to the playoffs.

PROGNOSTICATION The McGaffigan's will possibly have a tough couple of seasons coming up. Spare parts will have to do as injuries have done in this team for 2009. If Carpenter can rebound along with Bedard and Bonderman then Montreal could return to form in 2010. The offense is not without some stars and might be able to hang on this year but it could be a long season in Montreal.

Northwoods Moose 2008: 97-65			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Martin	SP	Hamels
1B	Cabrera	SP	Oswalt
2B	Phillips/Inglett	SP	Sheets
3B	Guillen	SP	E. Santana
SS	H. Ramirez	SP	Hudson/Jurrjens
OF	Upton/Sweeney	CL	F. Rodriguez
OF	BJ Upton/Harris	SU	Wade
OF	Drew/Dickerson	SU	Howell

Seven Things to Know

1. Hanley Ramirez led BW with 151 runs scored and 77 SB.
2. Roy Oswalt allowed the most hits in the NL-248.
3. Miguel Cabrera led the NL with 148 RBI.
4. Moose hurlers tied Aspen for the most HRA in the NL (210).
5. The Moose had lost the season series to the Macs (7-11) but won it when it counted (4-3).
6. JD Drew missed by 1 ribbie from having 100.
7. Tim Hudson is tied for second in career Wins (90).

LAST YEAR The past champion Moose had another stellar regular season but after they played four, seven game series' in the playoffs, the run finally came to and end in the World Series. At the end of the season they had most of the pieces in place for another run at a playoff spot for 2009. Northwoods did another fine job in the off season to keep them in the hunt for another title.

TRANSACTION REPORT Northwoods started the re-loading process for another strong season in 2009 with the acquisition of Russell Martin, along with some draft picks from Greenville. Next they traded for Carlos Guillen, a draft choice and 6 million in cash from Plum Island. Youngster Justin Upton appears prepared and so now another piece of the puzzle is in place to take over the opening in the outfield. In free agency the Moose added Brandon Phillips and JP Howell. The draft added an excellent reliever in Cory Wade.

PITCHING The rotation looks to be very strong for the upcoming season. Tim Hudson is coming off a year that saw him go 20-8 and finish fourth in Mathewson balloting. Cole Hamels (13-9, 4.33) was a youngster getting a feel for an entire BW season while veterans Roy Oswalt (15-11, 5.10), Ben Sheets (9-10, 5.92) arguably had off years. Forever prospect Ervin Santana and up-and-comer Jair Jurrjens both appear ready to step

up should a veteran suffer. All in all, not many BW teams possess the mound depth that the Moose employ. The Moose also have a rock in Fransisco Rodriquez to anchor the bullpen. Add in Cory Wade, Howell, Damaso Marte and Scott Linebrink and the Moose will also be very good out of the pen.

HITTING The additions of Martin (264-12-61 for GBS), Guillen and Phillips (All Star, post-season hero for the Sluggers) will make for another strong team. They have a very potent lineup from top to bottom. The only concerns may be that they are right hand heavy and the defense at first and third.

PROGNOSTICATION Northwoods looks to be a contender again for the Mays title. There is strong competition in the division but the overall strength of the pitching staff combined with a powerful lineup will hold this team in contention all year.

Palo Alto Robber Barons 2008: 97-65			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Mauer	SP	Peavy
1B	Teixeira	SP	Verlander
2B	Matsui	SP	Lannan
3B	Rodriquez	SP	Od. Perez
SS	Drew	SP	Pettitte
OF	Bay	CL	Putz
OF	Sizemore	SU	Marmol
OF	Kotsay/Johnson	SU	Embree

Seven Things to Know

1. Dr. Dick quite probably could destroy the world.
2. A-Rod led the NL with 58 bombs.
3. Jake Peavy is the reigning NL ERA champion.
4. The Barons 88% success rate at stealing bases topped the NL.
5. A-Rod had the only 4 HR game in BW in 2008.
6. Peavy was the Mathewson runner-up to Verlander.
7. Despite a potent offense, the Barons finished 11th in the NL in doubles.

LAST YEAR 2008 was a very good season for the Robber Barons. They finished with 97 wins and finished in a 2nd place tie with Northwoods. They had the league MVP in Alex Rodriquez who hit a whopping .347 with 58 homers and 132 RBI's. They also had the leagues Christy Mathewson award winner in Justin Verlander. Verlander won 20 games with a 3.24 ERA. Pettitte added 15 wins and Peavy contributed with 14 wins and 2.85 ERA.

TRANSACTION REPORT In the off season the big move BW was the trade that saw Montreal trading Grady Sizemore (305-31-97 for MON) and Reed Johnson to Palo Alto for Rick Porcello, Matt LaPorta, Max Ramirez and Palo Alto's 2009 2nd and Bonus round draft choices. The Robber Barons also added J. J. Putz, Chad Cordero, Todd Jones, Jason Istringhausen and Alan Embree to help out the pen. Unfortunately, the bank account funds almost ran dry and that curtailed them from making any other big moves. Not drafting until the 3rd round in the draft kept them from getting any immediate help.

PITCHING While the young Verlander is the reigning Mathewson holder, Jake Peavy is still the ace of the Palo Alto rotation. Three lefties will follow the sturdy righ-handers: John Lannan, Pettitte and Odalis Perez. If Palo Alto has the lead in the 7th inning, the backend of the bullpen will be an asset with Putz, Marmol (91 whiffs in 71 IP) and Todd Jones to hold that lead.

HITTING The 2009 Robber Baron offense looks very good. The 1 through 5 batters may be one of the best in BRASSWORLD. Sizemore, Mauer, A-Rod, Teixeira and Bay will produce a ton of runs for this team.

PROGNOSTICATION The rotation should be about average, with Peavy and Verlander leading the way. Pettitte and Lannan will do yeoman's work and Sean Gallagher and Odalis Perez will try to hold down the 5th spots in the rotation. The bullpen should be an asset, with Marmol, Jones and Putz closing games out. The offense will have to carry this club but there might not be a better five-some in BW than Mauer, Teixeira, ARod, Jason Bay (826 OPS) and Sizemore.

West Oakland Wolverines 2008: 74-88			
Lineup		Pitchers	
C	Johjima	SP	Buehrle
1B	A.Gonzalez	SP	Washburn
2B	Hill/Punto	SP	Marquis
3B	Mora	SP	Wellemeyer
SS	Reyes	SP	L. Hernandez
OF	Buck/Gutierrez	CL	Sherrill
OF	Morgan/Reed	SU	Arredondo
OF	Kubel/Headley	SU	Lindstrom

Seven Things to Know

1. Bob Askin has season tix so he can still watch Buehrle pitch.
2. WOW doubled 357 times, tops in the NL.
3. Rafael Soriano had a ridiculous 1.27 ERA in 70 IP.
4. Bill needs to be 4 measly games better than .500 to level his career BW mark at .500.
5. WOW was a game over .500 after three months of play in '08.
6. Mark Buehrle is 72-58 in his career.
7. WOW had no answer for the Cranes in '08 (2-10).

LAST YEAR West Oakland had a very good offensive season in 2008. They were second in the league in hitting with a .292 team average and slugged 202 homers. The part of the team that held them back was the pitching staff. The Wolverines finished with a team ERA of 5.09 and walked the 4th most hitters in the league.

TRANSACTION REPORT The Wolverines were fairly quiet in the off season. Their one big move was to pickup free agent Mark Buehrle. Buehrle signed a 5 year deal worth 20 million dollars. They also selected Jose Arredondo in the first round (8th overall) of the draft.

DOWN ON THE FARM West Oakland features some very good talent on the way in the near future. Jordan Danks, Desmond Jennings, Andrew McCutchen, Jake McGee, James Simmons and Jess Todd will soon be on the way to help.

PITCHING The pitching staff is anchored by Buehrle (14-6, 3.00 in GBS).After that the staff is a mix of journeymen like Todd Wellemeyer (2-6, 5.23) and reliable-armed vets like Jarrod Washburn (181 career starts), Livan Hernandez (201) and Jason Marquis (141). George Sherrill will close this year but will look to apprentice the new stars that are coming in behind him. Chris Perez and Jose Arredondo will soon take over the closer role, maybe as early as next year.

HITTING The Wolverines are about the same team as last year which means they will be good offensively. This team should hit the ball around the yard with leadership from

Adrian Gonzalez (311-32-110) and Jose Reyes (835 OPS, 65 SB). Look for the fresh bats of Elijah Dukes, Travis Snider and Jeff Clement to get mixed as the Wolverines possibly transition the core of the team over the next few seasons.

PROGNOSTICATION This team will be able to hold their own during the 2009 season but will probably finish somewhere towards the bottom because of the competition in the division. They will be improved over last year and slowly working the way towards the top of the division. By 2010 they could be a very formidable contender.

H O N O R R O L L

B R A S S W O R L D C H A M P I O N S

2003 SYRACUSE SKY CHIEFS
2004 PORTLAND GRAYS
2005 NORTHWOODS MOOSE
2006 MONTREAL MACGAFFIGANS
2007 MONTREAL MACGAFFIGANS
2008 SILVER SLUGGERS

B I L L G A L A N I S A W A R D

(FORMERLY THE BILLY BEANE AWARD)

2003 DANIEL VALOIS
2004 STEFAN FEUERHERDT
2005 COREY WEISSER
2006 ROB FOULKE AND TOM FISH
2007 MARK LENTZ
2008 JONAH KERI

On the Road Again



Some of our BRASSWORLD franchises have been of the wandering type, not staying in one city long enough to break more than a few bats, not to mention any hearts. On the website, there is an undirected chronology of the league's teams, documenting their arrival in town, and their departure, but what we still need is documentation of where each franchise has started, and where it has been. In this way, if any enterprising GM someday were to check on franchise records, he would be able to do so.

The junior circuit has had only 5 permanent franchises; the NL has seen 8 teams stay put the first 6 years.

Two BRASSWORLD trivia questions:

1. What teams have been in the most places?
2. What city has been home to two franchises?

Answers:

1. Montreal's McGaffigans are the reincarnation of the original Boston Braves (2003), Savannah Sand Gnats (2004), and Torrington Trumpeteers (2005). Unlike their MLB counterparts, the McG's look good for a long stay in Montreal. Likewise, this year, the Mequon club will be in its fourth city, see immediately below.
2. Taggart was originally a Mays division team the first 2 years of BW. After not having a team in 2005, the Taggart city fathers lured the Tampa Bay Bravos back to big T, this time as an Aaron division team.

Cobb Division

Mequon Keglers, Hogan's Heroes (2), Santa Barbara Quakes (2), Syracuse Sky Chiefs (2).

Waikiki Rabbits (1), Waukesha Keglers (5).

South Range Mariners (3), Rivendell Knights (3)

Alaska Hot Stoves (3), Baltimore Bay Sox (2), West Bend Rocks (1)

Ruth Division

Dublin Gaelforce (1), Exeter Alewives (3), Toontown Rabbits (2)

New York Metz (2), San Bernardino Stampede (4)

Hoboken Bums (3), Portland Grays (3)

Aaron Division

Georgia Satellites (1), Lake Zurich Stingrays (1), Buckeye Eclipse (4)

Taggart Titans (3), Tampa Bay Bravos (2), Abilene Longhorns (1)

Mays Division

Palo Alto Robber Barons (1), Mansfield Mounties (3), Taggart Titans (2).

Montreal McGaffigans (3), Torrington Trumpeteers (1), Savannah Sand Gnats (1), Boston Braves (1).

Newer GMs might check the history of their franchises to see what past glories they may feel pressure to live up to. Mequon hosts the franchise which won the first BW championship in 2003. Hoboken and New York inherited teams that had been built into powerhouses by their previous owners.

Because Taggart has been home for 2 different franchises, the league elders would have to adjudicate on how to resolve any issues regarding team and franchise records

Bob Askin's draft Diary follows. Oh my...



A few months ago I was approached by the BRASSWORLD Journal folks about doing a “behind-the-scenes” draft article. I said I couldn't recall a similar article in years past, so the following is my diary leading up to the 2009 BRASSWORLD draft, the event that could unlock the BRASSWORLD championship in 2013 or 2014. If nothing else, it may provide some insight into how exactly the Greenville franchise has become BRASSWORLD's version of the Washington Generals, playing the part of designated loser in each of its four playoff appearances.

And heck, some of this might even be true.

January 11, 2009: My arrival on the campus of Furman University, the site which would become the Black Sox war room for the 2009 draft. The FU campus was chosen because it was decided that if we were to make the most informed selections we needed to be surrounded by people smarter than ourselves. Other nearby colleges and universities, like Clemson and the University of South Carolina, were considered, but after meeting many of their alumni those sites did not meet the criteria.

January 12, 2009: Field Manager Tom Emanski arrived at FU around 8am, eager for a fresh start. Tom is entering his 7th season on the Black Sox bench. His back-to-back-to-back AAU titles have not exactly translated into BRASSWORLD postseason success, despite back-to-back-to-back playoff appearances. Tom is also in charge of our upper-level scouting. Most decisions regarding the drafting of Y1 and MM players will come from Tom, since he is ultimately charged with meshing those players into our 40 man roster. Tomorrow will be an important day, with our Director of Scouting scheduled to arrive around noon. We head to Monterrey Mexican Restaurant, just down the road from the Furman campus. Monterrey has huge 32 ounce drafts for \$2.99.

January 13, 2009: A grand FU welcome greets Director of Scouting Fred McGriff upon his return to Greenville. It was his glowing recommendation that led to Tom Emanski being installed as the franchise's field manager. As soon as Fred's playing days with Port Richey ended in 2005, we were happy to scoop him up in a scouting role. Fred is in charge of the younger minor leaguers, with no major league experience. It's Fred's expertise that will directly lead to the strength of the 2012, 2013, 2014 version of the Black Sox you see on the field, while Tom focuses on the present and short-term future of the club. I, meanwhile, focus on the free agency and payroll aspect of the club. The roles suit the club well, giving us the checks and balances we need to make semi-informed decisions. After breaking for the evening, we head to Monterrey for two beers.

January 14, 2009: State of the Finances Address. After the trade for Derrek Lee prior to the 2008 season we knew payroll would become a big issue, with over \$34M committed to him through 2010. Two big pieces in the Lee trade were Dexter Fowler and Chris Iannetta. We are confident in our scouting department's ability to find good talent. We set a \$50M payroll goal by 2011. The 2009 payroll projects to be under \$54M, and 2010 looks very similar. Once Lee and Tejada come off the books in 2011, we project a payroll of \$39M with three open roster spots. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for three beers.

January 15, 2009: State of the Club Address. The upcoming season does not project as well as the last two. The bullpen should still be strong anchored by Chad Qualls and Tony Pena. The starting rotation may take a hit. Harang and Snell both project downward, while 3/5 of the rotation (Byrd, Olsen, Duchscherer) may be a push or a little better than 2008 (Buehrle, Garland, Chuck James). Infield defense will be better (1,1,2,4 first to third), outfield defense projects slightly downward, with the batting order taking the biggest hit. Only three of the eight spots in the order project to have a better year than 2008. Still, the team comes off a 94 win season. The 2009 version of the Black Sox should win more games than it loses, but probably not much more. More good news follows: We have more than enough PAs and IPs to get through 2009. With no needs, we can select the best players regardless of position. Our roster currently sits at 38 players, which means the draft is truly wide-open to us. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for four beers.

January 16, 2009: Both Tom and Fred arrived armed with reports on players they had been following. We ranked players by the round in which we felt they were worth taking. Two players seem to keep coming up in conversation more than any others, Aaron Hicks and Madison Bumgarner. However, we have the 17th pick in the first round and it is unlikely either player will still be there. The one thing that gives us hope is the knowledge that both players are probably 3 or more years away from contributing to the major league club. Perhaps that will drop their stock into the latter half of the first round. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for five beers.

January 17, 2009: After a good night's rest, Tom cautions against the selection of Bumgarner. He may be right. Our track record of minor league pitchers is not very good with only Buehrle, Snell, Qualls, and Corpas being the only successfully home-grown pitchers in team history. We hope Jake Arrieta can be added to that list in a year or two, but two other current minor league pitchers, Gaby Hernandez and Kasey Kiker, look suspect. We decide to scale back on some of our pitcher draft projections, but in the end Bumgarner looks too good. Finally, our first draft decision has been made: If either Hicks or Bumgarner is available when we pick, one of them will become a Greenville Black Sox. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for six beers.

January 18, 2009: A rumor circulates around FU that former Furman pitcher Tom Mastny is on the campus. The rumor turns out to be false. Besides, Mastny is still Bloomington property. Nevertheless, we decided to lay low and did not head to Monterrey this evening.

January 19, 2009: A fresh start on a fresh day. We start to make contingency plans for selection number 17 should both Hicks and Bumgarner not be available. We count up the players we would be willing to take in the first round. The total is 15, two shy of our draft position. It is a concern, but not a very big one. We know we've scaled back on the number of pitchers we project in the first round. We purposely did the same with first basemen and outfielders simply based on need. With Lee signed for two more years, our highest projected first baseman is in the 2nd round. We have four full-time outfielders on the roster. We anticipate the loss of free agents Dye and Suzuki after the 2009 campaign, with the hope that Aaron Cunningham and/or Nate Schierholtz can finally be given a chance to perform at the major league level. For that reason, we only have two outfielders ranked as first round prospects, one of whom is Aaron Hicks. We are banking on at least two teams pulling someone from these categories to allow us to select one of our top 15 prospects. We broke for the evening, but because of the Mastny rumor, we decided to go further from campus to Chiefs Wings and Firewater.

January 20, 2009: Time to project our next few draft picks. We do not have a second round pick having traded it away as part of the Francoeur, Olsen, Milledge trade. We do, however, expect compensation picks for the loss of free agents Buehrle and Garland. Our next pick is number 26 overall. To maximize our minor league system, we agree to select a minor leaguer with this pick, one that won't count against the 8 min limit. According to the ranking system put in place by Fred and Tom, there are 22 minor leaguers worthy enough to select in the first or second round. Again, we will need to bank on at least four teams selecting a Y1 or mm player prior to our selection at number 26. We broke for the evening and headed to Chief's Wings and Firewater for two beers.

January 21, 2009: The future gets a little cloudy when projecting our next pick, the compensation pick for John Garland, number 54 overall. We would like to stick with our plan of selecting another minor leaguer here to circumvent the min limit, but it may be difficult. Obviously, we will select from our list of top 22 minor leaguers if any are still available. Fred believes this might be a good spot for one of the first basemen we downgraded into round number three, Allan Dykstra, Freddie Freeman, Sean Doolittle, Mark Trumbo, or Kyle Blanks. His other plan is to address the catching position after the postseason trade of Russell Martin. While Gerald Laird provides a good bridge to the future, Fred projects as many as ten catchers good enough to be drafted in the first three rounds. This may be a place to grab someone like

Carlos Santana or Mike McKenry. Pulling from those two pools, we could add ten more minor leaguers to our current list of 22. Could all 32 really go in the first 53 picks? We grabbed a cute Furman graduate student, a foreign exchange student from Sweden, who has been acting as our front office intern. Tom asked her to research past BRASSWORLD drafts and report her findings to us in the morning. We broke for the evening and headed to Chief's Wings and Firewater for three beers.

January 22, 2009: Our Swedish exchange student greeted us early this morning with the results of her research. The last four drafts have seen 17, 19, 24, and 29 mins drafted in the top 50 picks. Fred cheered the findings, knowing he had 32 picks lined up for that selection. Tom and I, on the other hand, were not so optimistic. We were worried about the upward trend of those previous draft numbers. Not once in the last four drafts had the number of mins declined from the previous draft year. Would this be the year the number of mins increases to 30 or 31 of the top 50? We broke for the evening and took our exchange student to Al's Pumphouse on Poinsett Highway. It's our first trip to a college bar. We stay for one beer. Our Swedish intern drinks Absolut.

January 23, 2009: A potentially devastating blow is dealt to the Black Sox, when Paul Byrd publicly states he may retire. He certainly didn't look washed up last season posting a 1.32 WHIP in 180 innings when we signed him for two more seasons. The Black Sox knew banking on more than two more years from the 38 year old was dangerous, but the staff felt even with a regression, Byrd would be able to manage as a 3rd or 4th starter through 2010. Now all of that is uncertain, as is \$3.8M per year. Talk turns to the possibility of gaining a starter via the draft, but Tom is not pleased with the options. Armando Galarraga appears the only safe bet to help in 2010, but again he probably won't be available with the 17th pick. Jorge Campillo is added to the watch list, but is not highly regarded. J.A. Happ is an intriguing possibility. Fred always liked him as he advanced through the minors, but would he be able to help should Byrd not be available in 2010? Tom is not convinced he'll be able to provide enough innings in 2010 to replace Byrd's potential. All three are moved up on the watch list for the first pick (Happ and Galarraga to #3 and #4), but nobody in the room feels confident. We broke for the evening and headed to Chief's Wings and Firewater for two beers.

January 24, 2009: After a night's rest, we begin to move people around. It is decided that Freddie Freeman deserves more attention as possibly the first 1st baseman on the list, surpassing Logan Morrison. Tom notices Freeman's BB-to-K ratio is outstanding for someone so young and with so much power. He is added to our list of 22 top minor leaguers. It's also decided to downgrade J.A. Happ. As well as he's pitched in the minors, Fred questions his potential to blossom into even a #3 starter. Can we afford such a question mark so high on our list? We now place him at #9 between Connor Gillaspie and David Huff. That makes our top 4: Hicks, Bumgarner, Galarraga, and Jose Arredondo. We

broke for the evening and headed to Chief's Wings and Firewater for three beers.

January 25, 2009: Extremely excited about today's developments. Lou Marson jumps to #5 on our watch list. He seems to be major league ready and he qualifies as a mm player, meaning we could grab him in the first round and still hold to our plan of drafting mins with our next two picks, maybe enabling us to select another catcher later in the draft. The feeling in the room is that of all the players discussed so far, Marson may be the one that is actually available when we select with the 17th overall pick. It's been a week since the Mastny rumors hit the FU campus. We felt it was safe to return to Monterrey for a beer after breaking for the evening.

January 26, 2009: Paul Byrd has recanted his statements from the other day. He now expresses interest in pitching in the major leagues in the second half of 2009. Tom Emanski is still incensed that someone who looked far from washed up four months ago is contemplating calling it quits. It's difficult when we've committed \$3.8M per year for two years. Tom overturns the conference table. On his way out, he tosses one of those college class room chairs, you know the kind that has the retractable writing platform come from the right-hand side, into (not against, into) the wall. As a fellow left-hander I've always wanted to do that.

January 27, 2009: David Dick has just sent the draft website passwords and the Black Sox have a new number one priority. After combing the website, we found Denard Span is eligible to be drafted again. Henry and I had discussed a deal for him a few years back, but I felt his asking price of Dustin Pedroia was too high. With the prospect of losing Ichiro after the season, Span certainly would give us a young outfielder for a number of years if he could team with Francoeur and Milledge. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for a beer.

January 28, 2009: Brad Ziegler becomes the overwhelming choice after Marson. Ziegler had a great year, but what took him so long to get to the majors? Is he a fluke, or is his success sustainable? We agree that after our top six, we'll take a flier on Ziegler even if it's only for one season. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for two beers.

January 29, 2009: After much discussion, we re-categorize three players into first round status, making our new total 19. That means we will definitely get one of those players with the 17th pick. We agree Pablo Sandoval, with no real position, should be placed at the end of our first round prospects at number 19. Brett Wallace and Dominic Brown are the other two we shuffle into the first round mix. We place them at numbers 12 and 13, ahead of J.A. Happ and the second wave of major league ready arms. Currently, Martin Prado is number 17 on our list. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for three beers.

January 30, 2009: The draft is nearly upon us. The consensus in the room is that Sandoval will be selected before we pick at number 17. If that is the case, Jim Johnson is the player we have ranked at number 16. He had a decent year with Baltimore in 2008, but his injuries indicate he may be just a one year player in Greenville. Overall, he'd bolster the pitching staff in 2009, but he is not to be counted on producing after this season. Such is the dilemma in the bottom half of the first round. Tomorrow David Dick will open the draft. That will give us a better indication of what to expect. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for four beers.

January 31, 2009 11pm: End of day one. Five picks taken and nothing unexpected happened. Bumgarner, Galarraga, Posey were all in the top ten on our list. Campillo was among those considered for our first pick. NYM took Stephen Strasburg, our number 16 among min players. Our top five is now Span, Hicks, Arredondo, Marson, and Ziegler. PIG has the next selection. We call it a night wondering if Henry will double-dip and draft Span for a second time.

February 1, 2009 4:28pm: Four picks away. Span was not selected by PIG, but he and Aaron Hicks went back-to-back at picks nine and ten. ALA, NYM and DUB help us out by drafting players below our top 17 threshold. Aviles was 18, Fred disliked Stanton's propensity to strike out, and Santana was part of the deep catching class. As to be expected, our top five have been taken, but four of our top ten remain, ensuring us of obtaining Lou Marson, Brad Ziegler, Conor Gillaspie or David Huff.

February 2, 2009 11:55am: Handshakes and high-fives are exchanged as Montreal and Alaska opt for two of our top 23 mins (Beckham and Morrison), allowing us to take Lou Marson, who immediately becomes our catcher of the future following the earlier trade of Russell Martin. Now, our sights are set on our compensation pick for the loss of Mark Buehrle. We remain committed to our decision of a min player in that spot. That means that Ziegler will probably not don a Black Sox uniform. Atop our list are David Huff, Dominic Brown, Jason Castro, and Derek Holland. Huff and Castro appear to be the closest to the majors. Castro and Brown play positions where we do have some depth.

February 2, 2009 8:30pm: Only Holland has been taken from our top 4, with Williamsburg picking in front of us. Minutes later, Williamsburg selects Jon Niese, and we grab David Huff, who may find a role with the Black Sox as early as 2010. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for a celebratory beer. We lifted our 32 ounces with our left hands in honor of our new southpaw. It will be a long day tomorrow, spent mostly watching names fly off our list, calculating who to take 28 picks from now.

February 3, 2009 3pm: Brown, Castro, and Jesus Montero have been selected from our target list. Incredibly, twelve of the 24 picks in round two are players with major league service. We select in 12 picks and still have 15 mins on our list. It's still too early to target two or three specific players, but we begin breaking down the various names. There is no consensus in the room. The list looks more like 15 guys ranked horizontally rather than a list with a top or a bottom.

February 3, 2009 7:20pm: Six picks away and we have finally pared down our list to four min players: Freddie Freeman, Vin Mazzaro, Austin Romine, and Peter Bourjos. None is a slam dunk. Of the bunch, Freeman is as close to a "can't miss", but we have not had much success drafting Braves (Moylan, James). Mazzaro looks like he may be able to help the Black Sox in 2010, but again, our track record of pitchers is sketchy at best. Romine seems to be the better Yankee receiver between he and Montero, and their offensive stats are not that different, but there's no guarantee Romine will win the long-term job. Bourjos is a potential gold-glover, but he strikes out too often for someone who projects to have little power.

February 3, 2009 9:32pm: One pick away, and the decision is Freddie Freeman. The deciding factor turns out to be the depth of each position in the draft. Catching, outfield, and pitching seem to be much deeper than first base. The feeling in the room is that there is significant drop off after Freeman to Allan Dykstra, Sean Doolittle, David Cooper and Ike Davis. Should Hoboken go for Freeman, plan B is Mazzaro. The pick will have to come in the morning. Tom and Fred stay behind to map out the round 3 pick where the eligible pool opens again to include mm and Y1 players. I broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for two beers.

February 4, 2009 5:43pm: With Mazarro and Romo taken, the debate is between Romine and two Y1 players, Brian Buscher and J.A. Happ. Tom prefers Buscher who has seen action at 3B, a future need in the organization. Fred projects Buscher to be a platoon player at best, albeit a good platoon player in the right situation. Happ can provide innings in 2009 and may contend for a rotation spot in 2010. More reports surface that Montero will be moved from behind the plate, possibly clearing the way for Romine. If that does happen, it may not be in a Black Sox uniform. The choice is Happ, who we originally considered with our first round pick. If we believed he had the ability at that spot, we need to grab him now, in the 3rd round.

February 4, 2009 8:09pm: The draft begins to turn toward the bonus round. We still have some 2nd round min talent available like Jess Todd, Romine, and Ivan DeJesus Jr., but there's also 18 selections between now and our next pick. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for three left-handed beers, for our lefty in the third round.

February 5, 2009 10:38am: WOW takes Jess Todd, leaving no doubt in the room the choice will be Romine should he last the next ten picks. We came into the draft wanting to shore up our catching after dealing Martin to Northwoods. Even with Marson in the first round, we feel Romine grades above DeJesus and a few others considered, and again, there's a drop off between Romine and the next available catchers.

February 5, 2009 3:56pm: Ten picks pass over Romine and we are elated to take him, especially since we considered selecting him two days ago with our compensation pick. DeJesus, Bourjos, and Andrew Cashner are atop our wish list at this point, but without a fourth round pick it'll be a long wait to see who is still available in round five. We broke a little early and headed to Monterrey for four beers.

February 6, 2009 8:34pm: A long day winds down. Luckily for us in the Sox war room, round four has seen most teams add to their major league rosters, with 13 of the the 24 picks having logged time in the majors. We are looking for mins in round five and six to round out the farm system. Our pick is twelfth in line and our top five consists of: DeJesus, Bourjos, Cashner, Juan Duran, and Jordan Danks. DeJesus emerges as the front-runner. Of the bunch, he seems closest to the majors, outfield isn't a pressing need, and we have stated a desire to stay away from arms many years away from helping the major league staff. However, with twelve picks to go, we know we need to have a deeper list. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for five beers.

February 7, 2009 10:50am: Fred had projected DeJesus as the second best 2nd baseman in the draft. The latest reports, however, state that Los Angeles is committed to keeping DeJesus at shortstop. That certainly gets Tom's attention knowing that Tejada will be a free agent after 2010. Now, we just need to wait out seven more picks.

February 7, 2009 1:33pm: No movement yet. A quick check on the draft website reveals that, much like last round, most of the teams directly in front of us have reached their allotment of mins and need to concentrate on Y1 or mm players. The wild card is NOR, who may have another spot or two left for a min player.

February 7, 2009 3:01pm: High-fives are exchanged around the room when a run on auto-picks, including Peter Bourjos to VIR, drops DeJesus to us. NOR did opt for a min pick, but it was Jose Ceda. We'll have one more pick tomorrow and we still have a few players listed that we think should have been taken already (Cashner, Duran, Danks). We begin to assemble a list of additional names from our next tier, just in case. This list includes John Raynor and Brian Duensing, who may be able to help the Greenville staff in 2010. We broke for the evening and headed to Monterrey for six beers.

February 8, 2009 8:55am: Next season, we need to swap draft positions to ensure we pick before WOW. BRASSWORLD is a deep league with a deep draft. If you identify a player you want, you need to draft him immediately because usually there are 23 picks before your next selection. Three times in this draft WOW has dipped from the short pool of players we identified as our next pick, including Jordan Danks just a few minutes ago. With our aversion towards minor league arms, we pass over Cashner and select Juan Duran. He's only 17 and we feel with our outfield situation we have the time to be patient with the young 6'6" slugger.

Everyone feels good as the team breaks for spring training at Siesta Key. Just how good this draft class is won't be known until 2013 when we find out if they become valuable contributors at the major league level. With a tip of the cap to *Baseball America*, we wrap up our draft with the Greenville Projected 2012 Lineup:

Catcher	Lou Marson
First Base	Freddie Freeman
Second Base	Dustin Pedroia
Third Base	Todd Frazier
Shortstop	Ivan DeJesus
Left Field	Aaron Cunningham
Center Field	Lastings Milledge
Right Field	Jeff Francoeur
No. 1 Starter	Jake Arrieta
No. 2 Starter	Justin Duchscherer
No. 3 Starter	David Huff
No. 4 Starter	Scott Olsen
No. 5 Starter	Ian Snell
Closer	Manny Corpas

Extreme Makeover: *BRASSWORLD Logo Edition*

Not satisfied with last year's efforts, which, let's be charitable, were rather pedestrian in general, I undertook to create some team emblems more worthy of the BRASSWORLD. The results for 2009 are a decided improvement yet in many cases still probably do not represent the last word.

New for 2009 is that the original BRASSWORLD franchises have been awarded a special "2003" notation somewhere on their logo to denote their status as founding franchises, still active as we enter our 7th year. In addition, most team logos now exhibit the BRASSWORLD "deep space" background taken off the website.

Cobb Division



2008

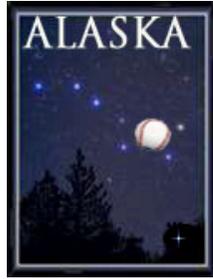


2009

In case you don't recognize him, that is a photo of the Babe himself, posterized and now the symbol of the BRASSWORLD 2008 champions. Note the "2003" in lower right corner; Silver is an original franchise. This might be my most favorite new logo. Wow! Definitely an extreme makeover!



2008



2009

The logo for 2008 was little more than a map; the new one does a better job at capturing some of the Frontier State's spirit. Most of my logos utilize the BRASSWORLD "deep space" (from Henry's website) as background. This one does not but I still cloned a twinkling star from that background in the lower right corner. No "2003" for Alaska; the team is only 3 years old.



2008



2009

Not a lot different but I do have BRASSWORLD deep space as background and the "GBS" is made with a decorative font to which subtle warping to the top has been applied so it will respect the outline the ball. A 2003 original franchise.



2008



2009

I really didn't like the logo at all for 2008 but exactly what is one to do with such a team name? The new one is admittedly generic. I need to find out what a Kegler is.

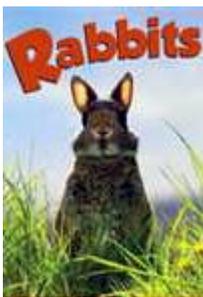


2008



2009

I changed this logo because I did not like the pale blotch from 10:00-12:00 on the old one. The new logo needs work too. Just now thought of putting the compass inside a baseball background. The font here is a new favorite of mine, "Porky's" for anyone else like me with a font fetish. Why is "South Range" not at the top? It's been a while since I did all these but IIRC, I tried and tried and for some reason the letters would not stick on top. Something called "leading", I think, was inadvertently changed.



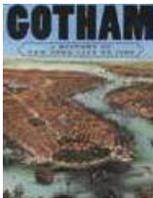
2008



2009

The old logo showed a picture of a rodent; good to have "Rabbits" across the top and hint of oversized ears otherwise I am not sure we would have known. In the new logo, the bat should be a little bigger. Wait till next year. As in most, there is the "deep space" background, here top and bottom.

Ruth Division

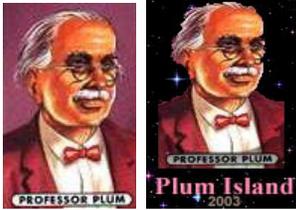


2008



2009

Another extreme makeover; what an improvement.



2008

2009

New for Plum Island in 2009 is the deep space background and the team name along the bottom, written in a plum color of course.



2009

2009

The Hoboken Bum just tweaked for 2009 with addition of the deep space background and use of the city name in Porky's font.



2008

2009

The Dublin logo still with room for improvement but at least the team sports the deep space background.



2008



2009

My best effort at changing the spelling from "Mets" to "Metz" is new for 2009. I added a swanky "NYM" to respect the cosmopolitan city.



2008



2009

Given the performance of the team, I found the Warner Brothers cartoon "WB" compelling for Williamsburg's new logo.

Extreme Makeover: BRASSWORLD NL logo edition 2009





Most of the NL logos now sport the deep space background from the website. Andy McGaffigan conjures up memories of Star Trek's "Tholian Web" episode as he floats and starts to disappear in BRASSWORLD deep space. Aspen's deep blue sky is actually a transformed, filtered version of the BRASSWORLD deep space. Is there anyone else who didn't know who the Georgia Satellites were? The Iron Horse himself, apparently quite a gem of man and player, is that left handed batter in LaFontaine's logo. West Oakland's wolverine this year shows what he is baring his fangs for. The Moose remains in his stately solitary splendor amid the great Northwoods, the logo altered only by "2003" honoring all original franchisees this year. The Robber Baron from Palo Alto not unexpectedly adheres to the motto, if you got it, flaunt it. The city name changed to Palm Harbor but the Sandcrane remains the mascot. Virginia's patriot marches in BRASSWORLD deep space; this fuzzy version will look better when it is smaller in the game. I hope Bill Galanis would have liked this new logo which uses the Maryland state flag for much of the background. Hermes inspires still 3000 years later as the symbol of the Bloomington franchise. Taggart's own unchanged proprietary logo is graciously donated for this article by its creator for completeness sake.